

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ALGIER 03068 091242Z

44

ACTION SS-25

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O P 091210Z OCT 75 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3058
INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NOUKCHOTT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

S E C R E T ALGIERS 3068

STADIS//////////

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PBOR, PFOR, AG, MO, SP, SS

SUBJECT: SPANISH SAHARA: M 48A3S TO KSAR ES-SOUK

REF: RABAT 4807

1. AT RISK OF STATING OBVIOUS, ALGERIANS WILL PERCEIVE PROPOSED TRANSFER OF M 84A3S TO KSAR ES-SOUK DESCRIBED IN REFTEL AS DIRECTED AGAINST THEM. IT IS A LONG WAY TO SPANISH SAHARA FROM KSAR ES-SOUKBUT ONLY ROUGHLY 200 KILOMETERS OF OPEN COUNTRY SEPARATE THAT TOWN FROM BECHAR, WHICH IS ONE OF CONCENTRATION POINTS OF RECENT ALGERIAN MILITARY BUILDUP. BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN RATTLING SABRES AT EACH OTHER AND PROPOSED KSAR ES-SOUK MOVE WOULD REPRESENT ONE OF LOUDEST CLANKS YET.

2. WE GATHER FROM REFTEL'S SUBJECT LINE THAT AMERICAN PERSONNEL AS WELL AS EQUIPMENT WILL BE INVOLVED IN OPERATION. ALGERIANS LIKELY TO PERCEIVE THIS INVOLVEMENT AS INDICATING SHALLOVNESS OF OUR COMMITMENT TO NEUTRALITY ON SAHARA AND AS CONFIRMATION THEIR SUSPICIONS OF OUR INTENTIONS TOWARD THEM. THEY HAVE NEVER HAD MUCH FAITHER IN OUR PROFESSIONS OF NEUTRALITY

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OR BENEVOLENCE ANYWAY, AND PROPOSED MUSLO/EUCOM ROLE

WILL CONFIRM THEIR SUSPICIONS. IT IS ONE THING TO HAVE SOLD MOROCCANS TANKS IN 1974 UNDER ONGOING MAP PROGRAM. IT IS QUITE ANOTHER TAID IN TRANSPORTATION OF THESE WEAPONS AT TIME OF TENSION TO LOGICAL BASE OF OPERATIONS AGAINST ALGERIANS.

3. THIS CONFIRMATION OF THEIR SUSPICIONS WOULD COME AT TIME WHEN ALGERIANS ARE TAKING MORE MODERATE LINE ON SUCH ISSUES AS OIL PRICING, PREPCON, AND MIDDLE EAST. WHILE WE DO NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND REASONS BEHIND CURRENT MODERATION AND RECOGNIZE IT QUITE POSSIBLY ONLY TEMPORARY, CURRENT DIALOGUE IS USEFUL AND WE SEE NO REASON IN ENDANGERING IT AND POSSIBLY DAMAGING OUR COMMERICAL RELATIONS IN ORDER TO SUPPORT HASSAN'S MILITARY CRUSADE.

4. WE HOPE TRANSPORTERS WILL NOT BE PROVIDED OR PROMISED UNTIL AFTER SAHARA ISSUE HAS QUITED DOWN. TO MAKE THEM AVAILABLE CAN DO US NO GOOD AND COULD DO US CONSIDERABLE HARM.PARKER

SECRET

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